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### **Inheriting Dispossession, Mobilizing Vulnerability: Heritage amid Protest in Contemporary Turkey**

#### **Abstract**

This article discusses recent Occupy-style protests that took place at sites of heritage quality in Turkey. It looks into the material and discursive ways in which the protests have negotiated possession, dispossession and belonging across time. Cultural heritage is more often than not understood as a 'thing' belonging to a particular proprietor (regardless of heritage's intangibility or the proprietor's collectivity or anonymity). It is regulated as such not just on the level of nation-states but also globally. The examples discussed in this article, however, have seen much of this association thrown into disarray by shifting focus, instead, to vulnerability and dispossession. This shift of focus invokes the following two forces: (1) the violent pasts and their role in the production of 'cultural heritage' as such, and (2) the risk of earthquake and its prompting of negotiations over the use, ownership and physical layout of heritage-quality sites. What sorts of political agency might heritage enable when it is experienced and conceptualized through vulnerability and dispossession? What might such experience and conceptualization mean for the temporalities and human–nonhuman hierarchy associated with conventional understandings of belonging in and through heritage? The article explores these questions through two cases: Gezi Park and its environs in Istanbul, and the Tigris Valley (including Hewsel Gardens and Mount Kırklar) in Diyarbakır.

**Keywords:** heritage, temporality, property, belonging, violence, disaster

The official ways in which heritage is regulated and managed have intimately linked it to proprietorship. Cultural policies on both national and global scales implicate heritage as a property that embodies the culture possessed by a collectivity (whether 'the nation' or 'humanity') that is imagined as an

individual proprietor.<sup>1</sup> As Tunbridge and Ashworth have shown, ‘heritage is someone’s heritage and therefore logically not someone else’s: the original meaning of an inheritance implies the existence of disinheritance and, by extension, any creation of heritage from the past disinherits someone completely or partially, actively or potentially’.<sup>2</sup> Heritage, then, is inherently exclusionary. Yet the very mechanism of exclusion that underpins heritage also defines today the lived experience of a growing part of the world’s population. Precarious working conditions, radical alterations in the use, disposition and physical layout of built and natural environments in both rural and urban areas, climate change and armed conflict across the globe, operate in interrelated ways to exclude ever greater numbers of people from experiencing safety and security for increasingly longer periods of time.<sup>3</sup> While this exclusion has not been altogether caused by but has only crystallized due to events in this century,<sup>4</sup> the social reaction to it has recently become more visibly unified and consolidated in the particular form of bodily assembly in public space that is now widely known as Occupy-style protest.<sup>5</sup> Since 2013, Turkey has seen such protest take place in sites listed, nominated and/or considered as heritage by different actors, where the heritage quality associated with each site has become entangled with the various kinds of exclusion confronted by the protesters.

Studying this entanglement, I question the intimate link between proprietorship and heritage, focusing especially on questions concerning temporality and human–nonhuman relations whose conventional understandings have been key to this link. The recent protests in Turkey constitute a pertinent case study due not only to the global context of contemporary Occupy-style protests, but also to an aspect of the local/national context, namely the long-standing and across-the-board currency of sentiments associated with social exclusion and marginalization, such as victimhood and vulnerability, in the political arena.<sup>6</sup> The appeal of these sentiments is so wide that not just the opposition or representatives of rights-seeking communities, but also dominant political actors, such as those who have governed Turkey over the years, have mobilized them. The latter have most recently been represented by the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; in English: Justice and Development Party), who have been in government since November 2002.<sup>7</sup> A study of the ways in which contemporary protest negotiates heritage’s entanglement with social exclusion therefore, becomes all the more compelling in a case where the self-perception of marginalization is neither necessarily based on a lack of access to sociopolitical influence nor the preserve of those who express dissent against the political establishment, such as Occupy-style protesters. I argue that the recent protests in Turkey have mobilized, rather than just combated, the exclusionary nature of heritage, challenging dispossession’s associations with disempowerment, agency deprivation and political immobilization. This calls for a close and nuanced examination of the myriad relations between belonging and heritage, not all of which adhere to the conventions that underpin proprietorship-based understandings of heritage – especially those concerning the actors and temporalities involved in heritage production, use and management.

### **Inheriting Dispossession**

The public protests that erupted in Istanbul in the summer of 2013 were in many ways underpinned by competing notions of heritage.<sup>8</sup> Gezi Park, the epicentre of the protests, is part of a larger urban heritage site.<sup>9</sup> The bulldozer

that triggered the protests by attempting to uproot trees in the park was part of a government-endorsed redevelopment of Gezi and the neighbouring Taksim Square. This redevelopment was expected to include the reconstruction of a nineteenth-century military barracks demolished in the 1940s to make way for the park. Members of the government described the barracks as 'historical heritage'<sup>10</sup> and indeed officially listed it as such in 2012.<sup>11</sup> Once reconstructed, it would reportedly serve as a luxury residential and retail complex.<sup>12</sup> The protesters, who gathered on May 27 to stop the works and occupied Gezi until June 15 when the park was finally and forcibly evacuated, included members of Nor Zartonk, a group of activists drawn from Turkey's Armenian community. The latter were subject to various episodes of organized and state-endorsed violence, dispossession and displacement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a process that culminated in the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Nor Zartonk's protest tents were accompanied by symbolic gravestones made of Styrofoam [Figure 1] that referred to *their* heritage and read, 'You took away our cemetery but you will not be able to take away our park!' The slogan referred to the Armenian cemetery that used to be located just across the street from Gezi Park until the 1940s, when it began to be gradually taken over by buildings significant to the then-burgeoning nation-state project, including the state radio headquarters, a social club for military personnel, and some of Istanbul's first luxury hotels [Figure 2].<sup>13</sup>

In their fieldnotes on the Gezi protests, Alice von Bieberstein and Nora Tataryan consider Nor Zartonk's intervention in light of Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's conversations on dispossession.<sup>14</sup> Butler and Athanasiou speak of two distinct notions of dispossession that pertain to justice-seeking activism. The first concerns 'the predicament of being moved by what one sees, feels, and comes to know', in turn to 'find oneself transported [...] into a social world in which one is not the center'.<sup>15</sup> It is this sort of dispossession, the scholars suggest, which prompts one to act and resist together with others to bring injustice to an end. What often underpins the injustice in question indicates Butler and Athanasiou's second notion of dispossession: 'the systematic dispossession of peoples through forced migration, unemployment, homelessness, occupation, and conquest'.<sup>16</sup> The crucial question, for the scholars, is how to mobilize the first sort of dispossession towards collectively opposing the second. Their response builds on a rethinking of the experience of vulnerability that so often accompanies dispossession. According to Butler and Athanasiou, vulnerability has become so prevalent an experience today as to call for a shift in the way it is understood: from a disempowering deprivation into a common ground from which to seek new political alliances. In their words:

[T]here must be another way to enact vulnerability, without becoming socially dead from political destitution or subjecting others to a life of social death. This other way to live requires [...] a world in which collective means are found to protect [...] vulnerability without precisely eradicating it.<sup>17</sup>

There are at least two instances in which certain groups of actors have related the early-twentieth-century restructuring of the park and its environs as having led to dispossession. The first concerns the nineteenth-century military barracks, which the governing authorities have wanted to rebuild

Figure 1: Nor Zartonk's symbolic gravestones set up at Gezi Park, June 2013.

Figure 2: Satellite image indicating the former Armenian cemetery (blue) and military barracks (pink) in relation to today's Gezi Park and its environs.

as a prime example of what they have called ‘ancestors’ heirloom’.<sup>18</sup> The second instance involves the former Armenian cemetery whose memory is cherished by the Nor Zartonk activists. However, the way each group have dealt with past dispossession in the present is radically divergent. Consider the heritage-listing of the barracks, and its *in situ* reconstruction to serve as an exclusive asset and a space of consumption that would boost a particular idea of economic development.<sup>19</sup> These amount to a tit-for-tat strategy of overcoming vulnerability at the expense of inflicting new vulnerabilities on others. Nor Zartonk’s symbolic gravestones, on the other hand, did not demand a physical restoration of the past but drew an analogy between the community’s historical dispossession of the cemetery and other sorts of dispossession likely to occur in this part of town due to its potential redevelopment by the authorities. The latter approach, then, is a mobilization of vulnerability rather than its annihilation, and a prompting of the convergence between one’s own vulnerability and that of others. Also noteworthy in this respect are the materiality and aesthetics of Nor Zartonk’s intervention. The Styrofoam of which the symbolic gravestone was made, and the physical changes this material afforded over the course of the protests, stand in stark contrast to the illusion of permanence that characterizes many an officially endorsed architectural enterprise of heritage production, such as the barracks. The intervention could therefore be argued to have mobilized vulnerability not just discursively but also materially.

### **Mobilizing Vulnerability Through Heritage in Multiple Directions Across Time**

Taking the past literally versus considering it analogically to the present, and pursuing permanence versus employing temporariness: the differences between these approaches draw attention to the role of temporality in negotiating dispossession. I would like to attend to this role by way of Sarah Keenan’s concept of ‘subversive property’.<sup>20</sup> This concept, as Keenan has explained, concerns less ‘the proper(tied) subject’ than an ever-changing relation of belonging ‘held up by the surrounding space’, which can form ‘between a part and a whole’ as well as ‘between a subject and an object’.<sup>21</sup> In developing this concept, Keenan has rethought the temporal underpinnings of conventional understandings of property. In her words: Property produces linear time by contouring space such that particular objects and bodies (or, objects and bodies coming from a particular trajectory) are likely to continue on in their position in the future.<sup>22</sup> [...] Subversive property disrupts the linear time produced by hegemonic networks of belonging. Through introducing things that do not belong or bodies that are not properly oriented, subversive property interferes with the long alignment of braided durations that constitute the proprietorial link between past, present and future.<sup>23</sup> As indicated in the previous section, in Gezi the barracks project has been characterized by a linear structuring of national time, insofar as the authorities wish to see a nineteenth-century building be morphologically teleported to the twenty-first century and serve a particular idea of economic progress. Nor Zartonk’s intervention, however, highlighted not only the fact that progress is selective, as it requires the exclusion of certain social groups, but also that

such exclusions are manifold and ongoing. In so doing, it aimed to weave a temporally multidirectional network upheld by the space of Gezi Park to bring together those left out at various points along what dominant narratives may implicate as the nation's progress.<sup>24</sup> Nonlinearity, moreover, characterizes also the intervention's methodology itself. This methodology challenges the idea that, in justice-seeking activism through heritage, the relation between the dispossession and (re)possession of heritage-as-property need always be construed as a binary opposition and thus as a teleological trajectory, which ought to progress from dispossession to (re)possession.<sup>25</sup> Alongside the linear time of national progress, there are two further sorts of temporality to consider when discussing Gezi in light of dispossession. One of these is of a scale below national time, and the other, above. The first one pertains to day-to-day interaction and succession, which Michael Herzfeld has called 'social time'.<sup>26</sup> The second temporality concerns the impending Istanbul earthquake,<sup>27</sup> which could be considered an example of 'planetary time'.<sup>28</sup> The reason why these two temporalities were at work in Gezi has to do with the comprehensive and legally stipulated physical transformation of urban Turkey that has been underway since 2012. May 16 that year saw the passing of 'the Law (no. 6306) on the Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk' (henceforth referred to by its more popular agnomen 'the Disaster Law'), which purportedly aimed at disaster-proofing the country's building stock. A detailed discussion of this law is beyond the scope of this article.<sup>29</sup> But suffice it to say that the Disaster Law's definition of purview is so expansive as to be able to potentially subject any acre in Turkey to redevelopment, since the law has implications for not just the buildings and areas it designates as 'risky' but also the zones it identifies as 'safe' for new settlement.<sup>30</sup> The Disaster Law has therefore been criticized for serving government-endorsed 'ideological, political and economic interests', such as the centralization of power, spatial redistribution of urban populations, managing of conflicts in cities, and reorganization of land-based interest groups.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the law has implications for the everyday lives of millions, as flat owners whose property is located in a building or area subject to redevelopment under the Disaster Law are left with two choices: either to have their property expropriated if they refuse to agree with fellow residents or neighbours on the terms of their building's transformation; or, to engage in intense negotiation, surveying and market study to try and stretch those terms as much as possible.<sup>32</sup>

According to Donna Houston, disasters cause planetary time and social time to overlap one another; whereas these events are often taken for granted as belonging to a domain above and beyond ordinary people's lives (whether to the objective world of hard science or to the metaphysical realm of the divine), when they do take place, the fact that they are experienced in vastly uneven ways by different social groups renders explicit their sociopolitical character.<sup>33</sup> It is this sort of overlap upon which Houston has built her notion of 'environmental justice for the Anthropocene, [...] a project that materially and imaginatively situates environmental crisis in everyday terms, as something that we live with and strive to transform'.<sup>34</sup> The Disaster Law and its consequences, however, demonstrate the flipside to this conflation of planetary time and social time. The law's triggering a radical restructuring of the city on the grounds of earthquake risk may have proponed and protracted, through architectural means, the folding and unfolding of material space that would otherwise be caused instantly and in an unknown future by tectonic plates [Figure 3].<sup>35</sup> But this quantitative conflation of planetary and



Figure 3: A view of Fikirtepe, one of the most intensely transformed areas of Istanbul under the Disaster Law, April 2014.

Figure 4: Tents in the Gezi Park protests, June 2013.

social time has remained devoid of the qualitative counterpart required for a project such as Donna Houston's. <sup>36</sup> Its political potential has been channelled into a teleological structuring of time through property, whether in the form of government-endorsed narratives of a safer Turkey,<sup>37</sup> or in that of private struggles, ambitions and visions for capital accumulation.<sup>38</sup>

However, the Gezi protests, which took place at a time when the Disaster Law's physical and social impact had already begun to materialize, saw an altogether different mobilization of the risk of disaster. Foremost among the reasons why the protesters wanted to stop the bulldozers was the fact that the park is one of the last remaining green spaces in Istanbul's touristic and cultural centre, and, in that, the only site that can serve as an emergency assembly area and field hospital in the case of the earthquake that is said to be imminent in Istanbul.<sup>39</sup> The contradiction between the government's endorsement of the Disaster Law and their hostility towards Gezi was obvious to an activist, a photographer in her late twenties, who remarked that 'they are great at abusing the risk of earthquake for gentrification but oblivious to how indispensable places like Gezi are in times of disaster'.<sup>40</sup> According to another protester, a commercial agent in his early thirties, 'people proved in Gezi that, in case of disaster, they're likely to organize much better than the state'.<sup>41</sup> Another activist, a high school teacher in his early forties, remarked that,

the tents and the solidarity in Gezi reminded me of August the 17th [the 7.6-magnitude earthquake of 1999 in north-western Turkey]. [...] Also, we saw, and showed, how vital such a place is in case of disaster, and how it can serve to shelter thousands.<sup>42</sup>

The General Secretary of the Istanbul Branch of the Turkish Association of Architects, Mücella Yapıcı, who was among the protesters, drew a similar analogy when she said of the protests, 'in fact we were using the park as if to carry out an earthquake drill' [Figure 4].<sup>43</sup> Not only does this sort of incorporation of the planetary within the everyday mobilize, rather than seek to overcome, vulnerability; it also envisages the human–nonhuman dynamics involved in relations of belonging as one of mutual dependence rather than a hierarchy of people above artefacts, which reduces the latter to passive tools of capital accumulation along a linear temporal trajectory.<sup>44</sup>

### **Rethinking the Conventions of Proprietorship-based Heritage**

What forms of belonging other than those that involve a hierarchy between human and nonhuman actors could be enabled, then, by negotiating heritage through dispossession? I would like to explore this question through a second case from contemporary Turkey: that of the Tigris Valley in the south-eastern city of Diyarbakır. This city is the heartland of the northern quarter of the sociopolitical geography of Kurdistan that is scattered across four countries: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.<sup>45</sup> Since the mid-1980s, northern Kurdistan (or south-eastern Turkey)<sup>46</sup> has been the setting of intense armed conflict between the Kurdistan Workers Party (known by the Kurdish-language initials 'PKK') and the Turkish Armed Forces. While throughout the 1980s and 1990s the PKK sought to establish an independent Kurdish nation-state through military offensive, over the past decade

they have shifted to pursuing, through self-defence, a project of democratic autonomy within a federal Republic of Turkey.<sup>47</sup> In 2009, the jailed PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, and the state started unofficial peace talks accompanied by a truce, constituting what was popularly known as ‘the resolution process’,<sup>48</sup> which came to a halt in summer 2015 as the armed conflict began anew.<sup>49</sup>

This process between 2009 and 2015, which decelerated violence in Turkey’s south-east, also made a substantial impact on the built environment. Using the cease-fire as an opportunity to consolidate both military and civilian infrastructure, the state embarked on a set of projects, including high-security military outposts dubbed *kalekol* (‘castle-station’), hydropower dams and airports.<sup>50</sup> But new construction activity in the region was not limited to state-sponsored projects. In Diyarbakır, where I carried out research in 2012, most controversial among the new projects was a private housing estate atop Mount Kırklar in the Tigris Valley [Figure 5]. The name of this hill comes from the number forty (in Turkish: *kırk*) and refers to the forty Christian saints in whose memory a church is believed to have been built here in the fifth century.<sup>51</sup> Mount Kırklar has, therefore, long been considered sacred in Diyarbakır, but all the more so by Syriac Christians, a community whose local population has significantly decreased after successive episodes of violence, forced migration and dispossession from the late nineteenth century onwards.<sup>52</sup> The controversy around this housing project was heightened due to the diversity of the stakeholders involved, who included not

Figure 5: The Mount Kırklar estate, July 2012.

just the sort of people the local dissidents have come to identify as adversaries, such as retired military personnel and businessmen with close ties to the state, but also actors from the pro-Kurdish political movement, such as the municipality (who after all had to authorize the construction) and people affiliated with the PKK.<sup>53</sup> At one point during my fieldwork it was even rumoured, perhaps to boost pre-sales, that Abdullah Öcalan would move to this estate as soon as he was freed at the end of the resolution process. I also observed that the Mount Kirkclar project had begun to cause internal conflict within the pro-Kurdish movement. This was evidenced most significantly by a critical investigation into the housing project, conducted and written by a journalist working for the pro-Kurdish media agency ANF News, which was censored almost immediately after being published on the agency's website.<sup>54</sup> Two important developments regarding the Tigris Valley took place in 2013. First, it was nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Soon after the nomination, however, the state opened the valley to potential redevelopment under the Disaster Law.<sup>55</sup> This catalyzed the construction activity in the area that was already underway, such as the building of an upscale restaurant and an attempt to restructure the centuries-old swathe of agricultural land, called Hewsel Gardens (in Kurdish: Baxçeyên Hewselê) – just across the river from Mount Kirkclar – [Figure 6] as a 'recreational area'.<sup>56</sup>

As the medium of violence shifted – from armed conflict between two clearly defined camps, to environmental destruction by architectural construction, whose stakeholders crisscrossed the political spectrum – voices

Figure 6: Hewsel Gardens against the background of Mount Kirkclar, September 2014.

of opposition began to be raised much more loudly in late 2013. Local activists protested at the Mount Kirkklar estate and the nearby luxury restaurant, likening these developments to the military outposts that the state has been building elsewhere in the region.<sup>57</sup> Similar analogies were also drawn at a three-week Occupy-style protest that took place in Hewsel Gardens and referenced the Gezi events of a few months back.<sup>58</sup> Many of the protesters, as well as politicians from across the political spectrum, who acknowledged the damage done by construction activity in the Tigris Valley, suggested that supporting the valley's World Heritage Site bid required the demolition of projects like the Mount Kirkklar flats.<sup>59</sup> Conversely, the members of an eco-activist group named Bûka Baranê (Kurdish for 'the Bride of Rain'), who also participated in related protests, developed a proposal to preserve the flats for use as ecological villages to house Diyarbakır's urban poor and its refugees from the neighbouring war-torn Syria. This proposal was underpinned not only by the idea that demolition is as unjustly lucrative and environmentally harmful a process as construction, but also by a materialist genealogy of the project. In their spokesperson's own words:

The urban-ecological damage caused by the project is irreversible: sand was quarried from the sandpits in the Tigris Valley that have verged on eradicating the valley's habitat; cement was produced by carving into the region's mountains and polluting its air; iron, ceramics, copper, and aluminium were extracted from the area and transported into the construction site by carbon-emitting trucks; all of these materials were channeled into construction through a labour-intensive process. Demolishing the flats will not only lay waste to all of these raw materials and labour, but will also create a huge radioactive landfill – and will do so before the eyes of hundreds of homeless citizens and refugees.<sup>60</sup>

Those seeking to protect the valley's heritage quality – by likening the flats to military outposts and demanding their demolition – maintained at least two conventions inherent to proprietorship-based belonging. The first convention concerns the linearity of temporality: demanding to demolish the flats and thus to retract what has happened is a movement in time that is no less linear than development and construction. The second one has to do with the human–nonhuman hierarchy: comparing flats to outposts places them within a long-standing human power struggle, and therefore assumes that the significance of belonging is limited to human inhabitants. In proposing to preserve the flats, Bukâ Baranê, on the other hand, envisaged this significance to play out in multiple directions across time and in ways that do not necessarily involve humans. Their materialist genealogy of the estate demonstrates that the flats *belong* in the valley. The activists' demand that the estate be employed to accommodate the urban poor and refugees, asserts that the flats *also belong* to those in direst need. In short, Bukâ Baranê sought to mobilize the political potential of belonging by treating the latter as a relationship that unfolds across planetary time, as well as social time, and among non-living matter as well as between people and things.

### Conclusion

The recent protests that erupted in two of Turkey's heritage-quality sites mobilized particular processes of dispossession in order to lay claims on material space. These processes did not reaffirm the linear relationship

between dispossession and (re)possession, nor did they assume a relationship between heritage as property owned by a particular proprietor. Rather than pursue an unconditional idea of proprietorship-as-belonging, the protests mobilized vulnerability and exclusion in multiple directions across time. This mobilization has important implications for the dualisms whose conventional understandings underpin heritage-as-proprietorship, such as possession versus dispossession; security versus vulnerability; and humans versus nonhumans. It demonstrates that, in an increasingly volatile age, the taken-for-granted hierarchies involved in these dualisms – especially the strict association of political agency with only the first half of each dualism – ought to be rethought as temporally and spatially contingent.

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### **Endnotes**

1. The anthropologist Richard Handler, in his work on Quebec’s cultural heritage laws, demonstrates this point most influentially. Richard

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2. John E. Tunbridge and Gregory J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (Chichester: Wiley, 1995), 21.

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6. For recent analyses of the political currency of such sentiments in Turkey, see H. Bahadır Türk, '12 Haziran Seçimleri: 'Burada Herkes Mağdurdur'', *Birikim* 267 (2011): 15–23; Murat Altun and Sinan Erensü, 'Yer mi Anadolu Çocuğu? Bir Bilen-Mağdur Üreticisi Olarak Komplo Teoriciliği', *Birikim*, August 2, 2013, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/guncel-yazilar/486/yer-mi-anadolu-cocugu-bir-bilen-magdur-ureticisiolarak-komplo-teoriciligi>.

7. This aspect of AKP politics has been highlighted by both proponents and critics, who have respectively employed the expressions 'the government of the downtrodden' and 'chronic victims' to refer to the party. See Yetvart Danzikyan, 'AKP: Çevre de Biziz, Merkez de, Gaddar da Biziz, Mağdur da', *Birikim* 229 (2008): 20–27; Cemil Aksu, 'CHP Tabanı Solcu mu?', *Birikim*, November 4, 2010, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/guncel-yazilar/343/chp-tabani-solcu-mu>; Joost Lagendijk, 'Erdoğan hem cumhurbaşkanı hem mağdur olabilir mi?', *Zaman*, July 5, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, [http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazarlar/joost-lagendijk/erdogan-hem-cumhurbaskani-hem-magdur-olabilir-mi\\_2228960.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazarlar/joost-lagendijk/erdogan-hem-cumhurbaskani-hem-magdur-olabilir-mi_2228960.html); Selin Bucak, 'Turkey's Erdogan Seen Softening Style not Substance as President', *Reuters*, August 24, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://>

[www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/24/us-turkey-erdogan-rhetoricidUSKBN0GO0EI20140824](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/24/us-turkey-erdogan-rhetoricidUSKBN0GO0EI20140824). Further insight into the specific reasons behind the governing authorities' self-perceptions of vulnerability and marginalization is provided in Nebi Miş and Ali Aslan, *Erdoğan Siyaseti ve Kurucu Cumhurbaşkanlığı Misyonu* (Ankara: Seta, 2014), 12–14.

8. Chiara De Cesari and Michael Herzfeld, 'Urban Heritage and Social Movements', in *Global Heritage: A Reader*, ed. Lynn Meskell (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2015), 172.

9. Ibid., 173.

10. Aykan Çufaoğlu, 'İşte yeni Taksim', *Habertürk*, March 1, 2013, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/yasam/haber/824150-isteyeni-taksim>.

11. Elif İnce, 'Court Rejects Trial for Annulation of Gezi Park Redevelopment', *Hürriyet Daily News*, March 12, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/court-rejects-trial-for-annulation-of-gezipark-redevelopment-project.aspx?pageID=238&nID=63482&NewsCatID=340>.

12. İpek Üzümlü, 'Plans Voiced by PM for Mall at New Taksim Barracks Draw Criticisms', *Today's Zaman*, April 30, 2013, accessed January 18, 2016, [http://www.todayszaman.com/national\\_plans-voiced-by-pm-for-mall-atnew-taksim-barracks-draw-criticisms\\_314134.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/national_plans-voiced-by-pm-for-mall-atnew-taksim-barracks-draw-criticisms_314134.html).

13. Mehmet Polatel, Nora Mildanoğlu, Onat Eren and Mehmet Atılğan, 2012 *Declaration: The Seized Properties of Armenian Foundations in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Hrant Dink Foundation, 2012), 239–41; Heghnar Watenpaugh, 'Learning from Taksim Square: Architecture, State Power, and Public Space in Istanbul', *SAH Blog*, June 11, 2013, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.sah.org/publications-and-research/sah-blog/sahblog/2013/06/11/learning-from-taksim-square-architecture-state-powerand-public-space-in-istanbul>.

14. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) via: Alice von Bieberstein and Nora Tataryan, 'The What of Occupation: "You Took Our Cemetery, You Won't Have Our Park!"', *Cultural Anthropology Online*, October 31, 2013, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/394-thewhat-of-occupation-you-took-our-cemetery-you-won-t-have-our-park>.

15. Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, xi.

16. Ibid., xi.

17. Ibid., 158. For Butler's related discussions of vulnerability, see Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2004); and Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2004).



18. The expression in the original is '*ecdat yadigârî*'. See Emine Uşaklıgil, *Bir Şehri Yok Etmek: İstanbul'da Kazanmak ya da Kaybetmek* (Istanbul: Can, 2014), 23 and 225.
19. Watenpaugh, 'Learning from Taksim Square'.
20. Sarah Keenan, 'Subversive Property: Reshaping Malleable Spaces of Belonging', *Social & Legal Studies* 19: 4 (2010): 423–38.
21. Ibid., 423–24.
22. Ibid., 434.
23. Ibid., 438.
24. For a discussion of time and temporality in the Gezi protests, see Eray Çaylı, 'Taksim Square and Gezi Park Protests: Designing a Common Present, Future, and Past', *Centre for Policy Analysis and Research on Turkey* (ResearchTurkey) 2: 4 (2013): 36–44; Eray Çaylı, 'Resisting Verticality, Occupying Teleology', *Layering DiverCity*, ed. Emine Şahinaz Akalın, Arne Bunk, Georg Felix Harsch and Erich Pick (Hamburg: Textem, 2014), 111–18.
25. For a recent and elaborate discussion of the various ways in which heritage has been mobilized to overcome dispossession and secure possession, see Chiara De Cesari and Michael Herzfeld, 'Urban Heritage and Social Movements', in *Global Heritage: A Reader*, ed. Lynn Meskell (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2015), 181–84.
26. Michael Herzfeld, *A Place in History: Social and Monumental Time in a Cretan Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).
27. Over the past decade, the talk of a devastating earthquake being imminent in Istanbul has featured frequently in the public sphere on both national and international levels. For examples of the latter, see Jonathan Head, 'Istanbul Prepares for Major Earthquake', *BBC News*, January 1, 2012, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16357602>; Jennifer Chu, 'Seismic Gap May be Filled by an Earthquake Near Istanbul', *MIT News*, September 11, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://news.mit.edu/2014/seismic-gap-earthquake-istanbul-0911>.
28. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 69.
29. For such a discussion, see Miray Özkan Eren and Özlem Özçevik, 'Institutionalization of Disaster Risk Discourse in Reproducing Urban Space in Istanbul', *A/Z Istanbul Technical University Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* 12: 1 (2015): 221–41.
30. The Disaster Law defines three urban-architectural categories as its purview: (1) 'risky areas' – zones identified as at risk of causing damage

to lives and property due to their soil composition or the characteristics of the buildings they host; (2) 'risky buildings' – buildings which, while not necessarily located within risky areas, have 'completed their economic lifespan' or have been 'scientifically proven' to be at risk of falling down or receiving severe damage in the case of disaster; (3) 'reserve building areas' – zones identified as safe for new settlement. To view the law in full, see '6306 sayılı Afet Riski Altındaki Alanların Dönüştürülmesi Hakkında Kanun', *Resmî Gazete* [Turkey's official legislative bulletin] 28309, May 31, 2012, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/05/20120531-1.htm>.

31. Eren and Özçevik, 'Institutionalization of Disaster Risk Discourse', 221. The Disaster Law has not created these processes anew but has only unified and precipitated them, as the practices it has introduced can be considered an extension of the wave of urban transformation projects that have already been taking place piecemeal across urban Turkey since the mid-2000s: Tuna Kuyucu and Özlem Ünsal, "'Urban Transformation" as State-led Property Transfer: An Analysis of Two Cases of Urban Renewal in Istanbul', *Urban Studies* 47: 7 (2010): 1479–99.

32. While a comprehensive ethnographic study of how the processes triggered by the Disaster Law have impacted on sociopolitical subjectivity has yet to be published, Duygu Parmaksızoğlu's ongoing doctoral project on the Istanbul neighbourhood of Fikirtepe is one work-in-progress of which I am aware. For a short article in which she discusses initial observations from the field, see Duygu Parmaksızoğlu, 'From Home to Real Estate: Urban Redevelopment on the Axis of Speculation in Istanbul', *Jadaliyya*, October 6, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/19508/from-home-to-real-estate\\_urban-redevelopmenton-th](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/19508/from-home-to-real-estate_urban-redevelopmenton-th).

33. Donna Houston, 'Crisis Is Where We Live: Environmental Justice for the Anthropocene', *Globalizations* 10: 3 (2013): 439–50. Houston develops this point in light of works by Neil Smith, 'There Is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster', *Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, June 11, 2006, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/> Smith; and Eric Swyngedouw, 'Depoliticized Environments: The End of Nature, Climate Change and the Post-political Condition', *Royal Institute of Philosophy* 69 (2011): 253–74.

34. Houston, 'Crisis Is Where We Live', 440.

35. Indeed, the physical results of this 'folding and unfolding' has in many cases been so reminiscent of the aftermath of disaster that some of the areas being transformed have served as film sets for war scenes. See: Eray Çaylı, 'Architecture as Disaster: Business as Usual', *Failed Architecture*, May 27, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.failedarchitecture.com/architecture-as-disaster-business-as-usual>.

36. This distinction between 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' builds on Gell's concepts of 'A-series time' and 'B-series time'; whereas the first concept is about dates and calendars – about time imagined as quantifiable – the

second concerns temporality as it is experienced by humans in all of its possible forms, as discussed in Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images* (Oxford: Berg, 1992). Therefore, the acts of proponing and protracting by definition belong more to the first category than they do to the second.

37. Eren and Özçevik, 'Institutionalization of Disaster Risk Discourse'.

38. Here I use the adjective 'private' advisedly, to indicate both the individual- familial and the financial character of the enterprise. This is not to say that such an enterprise is altogether devoid of political character; it is to suggest that what governs this character in this case is private proprietorship. While research on this front remains to be conducted, potential implications are indicated by the case of a man nicknamed 'the bullhead of Fikirtepe', who for weeks refused to participate in the transformation of the area in which his house is located by resisting the demolition of his property. Initially hailed in the counter-mainstream press as a case of heroic resistance against the top-down transformation of his neighbourhood, the man was later denigrated as seeking personal profit by using blackmail to stop the project. However, he has argued that to ask for decent terms of transformation is itself a socially and politically implicated pursuit, rather than a merely personal one. For the story of this man, see Gülistan Alagöz, 'Family Resists Lucrative Urban Transformation Project in Popular Istanbul Neighborhood', *Hürriyet*, May 4, 2015, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/family-resists-lucrative-urban-transformation-project-in-popular-istanbul-neighborhood.aspx?pageID=238&nID=65943&NewsCatID=341>.

39. Sunay Gedik, 'Evet, mesele 3-5 ağaç değil!', *sol*, September 16, 2013, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://haber.sol.org.tr/devlet-ve-siyaset/evet- mesele-3-5-agac-degil-haberi-79708>.

40. Interview by the author, June 13, 2013. Names of the Gezi activists whose opinions are cited in this article have been omitted as their participation in this research was based on the condition of confidentiality.

41. Interview by the author, June 14, 2013.

42. Interview by the author, June 13, 2013.

43. Gedik, 'Evet, mesele 3-5 ağaç değil!'.

44. This point about considering human–nonhuman dynamics as non-hierarchical builds on new materialist theses developed most famously by Bruno Latour. See Bruno Latour, 'Drawing Things Together', *Representation in Scientific Practice*, ed. Michael E. Lynch and Steve Woolgar (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 19–69; Bruno Latour, 'On Technical Mediation', *Common Knowledge* 3: 2 (1994): 29–64; and Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

45. Carl Dahlman, 'The Political Geography of Kurdistan', *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 43: 4 (2002): 271–99.

46. Similarly, the city of Diyarbakır is also referred to as Diyarbekir or Amed, where the latter is preferred especially by members of the pro-Kurdish political movement. For more on the politics of naming in the region, see Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, 'The Social (Re)production of the Kurdish Issue: Multiple and Contradicting Trajectories', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13: 4 (2011): 375–88; Azat Zana Gündoğan, 'Space, State-making and Contentious Kurdish Politics in the East of Turkey: The Case of the Eastern Meetings, 1967', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13: 4 (2011): 389–416.

47. Ahmet H. Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, 'Confederalism and Autonomy in Turkey: The Kurdistan Workers' Party and the Reinvention of Democracy', in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation and Reconciliation*, ed. Cengiz Güneş and Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (London: Routledge, 2013), 186–204; Ahmet H. Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, 'Democratic Confederalism as a Kurdish Spring: The PKK and the Quest for Radical Democracy', in *The Kurdish Spring: Geopolitical Changes and the Kurds*, ed. Michael M. Gunter and Mohammed M. A. Ahmed (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2013), 163–86.

48. Bahar Başer, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: A Comparative Perspective* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), 64–70.

49. Zia Weise and Chris Stevenson, 'Turkish Airstrikes against PKK in Iraq Throw Two-year Ceasefire with Kurds into Jeopardy', *The Independent*, July 25, 2015, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news-19-6/turkish-airstrikes-against-pkk-in-iraq-throw-two-year-ceasefire-with-kurds-into-jeopardy-10416213.html>.

50. International Crisis Group, *Turkey and the PKK: Saving the Peace Process* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2014), 37.

51. For more on the religious-spiritual significance of Mount Kırklar, see Orhan Cezmi Tuncer, *Diyarbakır Kiliseleri* (Diyarbakır: Diyarbakır Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2002), 14 and 145; Max van Berchem, Josef Strzygowski and Gertrude L. Bell, *Amida: Matériaux pour l'Épigraphie et l'Histoire Musulmanes du Diyar-Bekr* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), 166; Gabriyel Akyüz, 'Diyarbakır Süryani Azizleri' (unpublished paper presented at the 'İl Nebiler Sahabiler Azizler Krallar Kenti Diyarbakır' symposium, Diyarbakır, Turkey, 2011), 23; Yuhanna Dolabani, René Lavenant, Sebastian Brock and Khalil S. Samir, 'Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Patriarcat Syrien Orthodox à Homs (auj. à Damas)', *Parole de l'Orient* 19 (1994): 604; Mehmet Ali Abakay, 'Kırklar Dağı-Kırklar Tepesi ve Kimi Tespitler', *Ayder*, August 17, 2012, accessed January 18, 2016, [http://diyarbakirayder.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=542%3Akirkklar-dagi-kirkklar-tepesi-ve-kimitespitler](http://diyarbakirayder.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=542%3Akirkklar-dagi-kirkklar-tepesi-ve-kimitespitler).

52. For material-spatially oriented discussions of the legacy of the various episodes of violence, to which the Syriac Christians of the Ottoman Empire (and, later, those of Turkey) have been subject, see Zerrin Özlem Biner, 'Multiple Imaginations of the State: Understanding a Mobile

Conflict about Justice and Accountability from the Perspective of Assyrian-Syriac Communities', *Citizenship Studies* 15: 3 (2011): 367–79; and Zerrin Özlem Biner, 'What Is Hidden Beneath the Mor Gabriel Monastery Wall? Consolidating Borders Between Self and Other, Self and the State', in *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: A Spatial Perspective*, ed. Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2014), 93–104.

53. Mustafa Doğan, 'Kırklar Dağı'nda mağduriyet ve rant', *ANF*, December 24, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.firatnews.com/guncel/kirklar-dagi-nda-magduriyet-ve-rant>; Hayri Demir, 'Kırklar Dağı'nda hepimiz suçluyuz, düzeltmeliyiz', *Evrensel*, December 21, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.evrensel.net/haber/100280/kirklar-dagindahepimiz-sucluyuz-duzeltmeliyiz>; Ferit Aslan and Bayram Bulut, 'BDP Milletvekili Altan Tan BDP'li belediyeleri sert eleştirdi', *Radikal*, March 3, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, [http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/bdp\\_milletvekili\\_altan\\_tandan\\_bdpli\\_belediyelere\\_sert\\_elestirdi-1179265](http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/bdp_milletvekili_altan_tandan_bdpli_belediyelere_sert_elestirdi-1179265).

54. An updated version of this piece was later published on the same website in 2014: Doğan, 'Kırklar Dağı'nda mağduriyet ve rant'.

55. This was due to the valley being declared a 'reserve building area', which implicates it as a zone safe for new settlement (see endnote 29).

56. Ayşe Seda Yüksel, "'Hevsel Is Our Past, Hevsel Is Our Future" – Twenty Days in Hevsel Gardens', *Gardens on the Edge*, March 1, 2015, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://gardensontheedge.com/2015/03/01/hevsel-is-ourpast-hevsel-is-our-future-twenty-days-in-hevsel-gardens>.

57. Dicle Haber Ajansı (DİHA), 'Kırklar Dağı'nda süresiz oturma eylemi', *Özgür Gündem*, June 7, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.ozgurgundem.com/haber/109825/kirklar-dagi-nda-suresiz-oturma-eylemi>; Haber 10, 'Kalekoldan farkı yok', *Diyarbakır Yenigün*, June 20, 2014, 1; DİHA, 'Yapılaşma yeşili yok ediyor', *Diyarbakır Yenigün*, June 20, 2014, 10; DİHA, 'Lice'deki Kalekoldan farkı yok', *Diyarbakır Yenigün*, June 20, 2014, 10.

58. Ramazan Yavuz, 'Hevsel Bahçeleri'nde Çadırılı Eylem', *Gerçek Gündem*, March 4, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.gercekgundem.com/medya/28890/hevsel-bahcelerinde-cadirli-eylem>; İhlas Haber Ajansı (İHA), 'Demirtaş'tan 'Hevsel' eylemleri açıklaması', *Milliyet*, March 5, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/demirtas-tanhevsel-eylemleri-aciklamasi-diyarbakir-yerelhaber-62336>; Cumhuriyet, 'Hevsel esin kaynağımız', *Evrensel*, March 8, 2014, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.evrensel.net/haber/79851/hevsel-esin-kaynagimiz>.

59. Miraz Rûspî, 'Kırklar Dağı konutları'na alternatif çözüm: Kırklar Dağı komünleri', *Yeşil Gazete*, January 31, 2015, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.yesilgazete.org/blog/2015/01/31/kirklar-dagi-konutlarinaalternatif-cozum-kirklar-dagi-komunleri-miraz-rusipi>.

60. Miraz Rûspî, 'Kırklar Dağı konakları'ndan komün olur mu?', *BirGün*, January 31, 2015, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.birgun.net/haberdetay/kirklar-dagi-konaklari-ndan-komun-olur-mu-74502.html>.